THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c) The project involves construction of a highway from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand through Bagan in Myanmar. Two Task Forces have been set up to look into the technical and financial aspects of this project, which includes the respective contributions of the countries. The next meetings of the Task Forces are scheduled to be held in the third week of December, 2003.

India's role in South and South East Asia

1028. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) with the successful conclusion of the Prime Minister's tour of ASEAN countries and based on the proven experience of growth of economies of these nations through investment by the multinationals, in which areas of economic and technological cooperations, India is taking initiative to strengthen its presence in this region;

(b) whether any concrete proposals have been made and vigorously followed; and

(c) if so, the response from these countries so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) India is taking concrete steps to strengthen its economic and technological presence in South East Asia through bilateral, sub-regional and regional initiatives, including the trilateral road project with Myanmar and Thailand, signing of a Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation with ASEAN and a Framework Agreement for Free Trade Area with Thailand. Negotiations are on for concluding a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Singapore.

(c) These countries have warmly welcomed India's initiatives for closer linkages with the region.